

Chapter 5 A New World

The 1980s began very well for the royal family. Some of its magic was coming back. The wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer, on 29 July 1981, was watched by millions of people on television. Diana looked lovely in her long dress, carrying flowers. She was only twenty, twelve years younger than Charles.

Charles always seemed old and serious, even as a young man. But now he chose a young, beautiful woman – this was really romantic! Her family were relatives of the royal family, so there were no problems there – the royal family was ready to accept her. She pleased ordinary young people too because she was a modern girl. Before her marriage she worked with children, had her own flat, and drove a little red car around London. She had a lot of friends, and went to nightclubs.

A few years later, in 1986, there was a second royal wedding, when Prince Andrew married Sarah Ferguson. Fun-loving Andrew now found a woman who could be part of his life. Sarah, with her bright red hair and loud laugh, seemed perfect for



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him. They first became friends when Andrew played a joke on her with some chocolate cake at one of Princess Diana's parties.

Diana and 'Fergie' were already friends. In some ways they were similar. Both their mothers left home when the girls were young. They both grew up to be modern working girls. But in other ways, they were very different. Charles was Diana's first lover, but Fergie lived with an older man for three years before she got married. She liked fun, and enjoyed 'play fights' with Andrew. She was ready to continue with a free, open kind of life after marriage. But Diana was serious about love, and wanted to be close to Charles. She cried when he was unkind to her, and she had a secret eating illness.

The public were glad that these two girls had their own kind of magic. They were like fresh air coming into Buckingham Palace! And soon there were children – Diana had two sons.

William and Harry. Sarah had two daughters, Beatrice and Eugenie.

So a new page was turned in the royal history book, with beautiful princesses, young families and modern ideas. But not everything was perfect. The public was more interested in the royal family now, but the newspapers were interested too. Reporters followed Diana everywhere. Every royal story was news – and there was more interest when it was about love, sex or family trouble.

Traditionally, the royal family like to keep quiet about their problems. They have their public duties, and their private life, and there is a clear line between the two.

‘It is hard for the royal family to welcome strangers,’ wrote one man who worked for them as a secretary.

There are family rules, but these are not usually explained, and people from outside the family do not always understand them. Diana was later very angry about this. She did not feel welcome, she said. Nobody told her what to do. But the royal family was angry – her husband too – when she didn’t do things in the right way.



A time of trouble began for the royal family and for the British nation. In the early 1980s, there was plenty of money and work. A lot of young people bought themselves cars and homes, and had a good life. But by 1987, serious money and business problems were beginning in Britain. People couldn’t pay back money to the banks, and sometimes their homes were taken away from them. There were fewer jobs; thousands of people, old and young, couldn’t find work. The magic disappeared.

Magic disappeared, too, in royal marriages. During the 1980s and 1990s, the marriages of Charles and Diana, Andrew and Sarah, and Anne and Mark Phillips all ended. These weren’t the first royal divorces. In 1960, Princess Margaret married Anthony Armstrong-

Jones, a photographer, and they had two children. But soon they weren't really living together. Anthony spent many nights away from home with other girlfriends. Margaret had lovers too. The most famous one was Roddy Llewellyn; he was nearly twenty years younger than her. In 1978 Margaret and Anthony were divorced.

'Things have changed greatly in the last twenty years,' Margaret told a reporter. 'Now I can do almost anything.'

And the newspapers could now write almost anything. They were quick to show photos of Sarah Ferguson on holiday with a lover, John Bryan. In one photo, he was kissing her toes – this picture, of course, immediately became famous! Diana was very popular with reporters. She made friends with them when she could not get help from the Palace. But it was a dangerous game. They listened to her. Then they often printed what they wanted. Some of the stories suggested that Diana was an ill, sad, crazy woman. So Diana finally decided to tell her own story.

She worked secretly with a reporter and writer, Andrew Morton. She sent him recordings, and he was able to talk to her friends. His book, *Diana, Her True Story*, was printed in 1992 and sold millions of copies. This book showed that Diana was very unhappy in her marriage. The book, and other reports and private recordings that came out that year, told the world about her husband's lover, Camilla Parker-Bowles.

Many people began to feel sorry for Diana. She was just a young girl, full of hope, when she met Charles. He was clearly hurting her. The new 'open window' on to the royal family was showing not only the good things, but also the bad.

'When daylight comes in, the magic goes,' some people said.

Now television shows began to make jokes about the royal family; sometimes these were funny, but sometimes they were very unkind. Fifty years before, you didn't make jokes about the royal family. Some of the young 'royals' tried to join in and laugh too. In 1987, they made a 'fun' television programme, with silly

clothes and rough games. This was the idea of Edward – the prince who was interested in the theatre. But most people didn't think that it was very amusing.

There was also a book called *The Queen and I*, written by Sue Townsend. In this story, a new government decides that there will be no more kings or queens in Britain. The royal family has to move out of Buckingham Palace and live in an ordinary house in a poor part of the country. The Queen has to learn how to cook. Charles gets into trouble with the police. Anne enjoys a drink at the local pub. They all learn that it is very difficult to live in Britain without much money.

The book was funny, and not unkind to the royal family. But it also had a serious message. Britain was becoming poorer at the time. Life was difficult for many families, and the royal family didn't always understand these problems. Their own lives were very comfortable.

Diana was popular, because she tried to understand. During her work for charity, she travelled in Britain and abroad, meeting children and adults. Some were very poor, many were ill or dying, and other people had no homes. Diana spoke about this more openly than other people in the royal family.

But in fact, other 'royals' also saw the unpleasant side of life. Princess Anne has worked for Save the Children, a charity, for many years. She has travelled thousands of miles abroad each year for the charity, often to poor or dangerous places. Her hard work is remembered everywhere. Her picture hangs proudly in a small restaurant in Eritrea, Africa, because she once came in to have a meal there.

Other people in the royal family take an interest in modern problems. Prince Charles started a very successful charity, The Prince's Trust; this helps young people with their work. He also tries to protect Britain's land and to plan better buildings. He is interested in other religions and traditions. This interest is very

important in modern Britain. Millions of British people have parents or grandparents who came from other parts of the world.

Charles and his father, Prince Philip, are both very interested in wildlife. Philip often helps the World Wide Fund for Nature; this charity tries to protect the natural world. In 1987, he spoke in a special radio programme from the church at Windsor Castle. Philip talked about science, and the teachings of the Christian religion. We can choose 'to do good', he said, and protect our world. We must look after the world for our children and grandchildren.



1992 was a very bad year for the royal family. The Queen called it her 'annus horribilis' – Latin for a 'terrible year'. The only good news came when Princess Anne married again in December. She and her husband, Timothy Laurence, had a quiet wedding, and they now try to keep their private lives out of the newspapers. During 1992 the marriages of Charles and Diana and of Andrew and 'Fergie' both ended. What was happening to the Queen's quiet, hard-working life?

The end of the year was even worse for her, because in November a great fire started at Windsor Castle, her favourite home. Many rooms were destroyed. The Queen helped to put out the fire. Four days later, when she made her famous 'annus horribilis' speech, her voice was still rough from the smoke. Most people try to do their jobs as well as they can, she said. The results are not always perfect. But we can all still try to be kind.